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ABSTRACT

A junior level field based practicum course involving potential student teachers and their cooperating teachers is described. Students and teachers meet during the first week of the course in an informal, relaxing atmosphere to become better acquainted and to share procedures, expectations, and general information on the course. Student teachers and cooperating teachers devise a list and time schedule of activities to be completed during the student teaching practicum. The rationale behind developing such a list and the advantages in its use are discussed. A sample list is included. (CJ)

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SOME HELPS FOR PREPARING STUDENT TEACHERS

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Preparing prospective teachers for student teaching in such a manner that it leads them naturally into the full classroom responsibility is a difficult and exacting task. Through a junior level field-based practicum course, Junior Practicum (JP), and the development of an Activities List used in this pre-student teaching course, the task of preparing for student teaching became for my students a manageable and meaningful experience. The purpose of this article is to give the reader an overview of the course as well as to share the Activities List with the reader.

First, we will discuss how the course was organized and how the Activities List was used within the course. Next, the Activities List and its rationale will be shared. Details of how it was used will be explored as well.

The Junior Practicum (JP) class called for two mornings a week in clinical settings and one hour a week in an on-campus seminar. Each student was placed on a self-selected grade level. He spent one half the semester at this grade level and the remaining half at another grade level at least two grades above or below his first choice. The requirement of two grade levels was made in order to give the student breadth as well as depth in becoming acquainted with the elementary school child and the varying methods of a teacher at those two levels. At the end of the semester the student chose from the two grade levels the one at which he wished to student teach the following semester.

Six local elementary schools were visited by the instructor prior to structuring the course and any teacher who had previously had our

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student teachers were sought for feedback concerning the course goals and means to those goals. These meetings proved to be valuable in two ways. First, the teachers were able to share ideas for making the course successful from their own unique perspective. Secondly, they gained some insight concerning the purposes of the course from the university's perspective and its place in the university's overall education program. The teachers provided invaluable feedback on ideas and activities that would be appropriate for this pre-student teaching field course.

Cooperating teachers who were chosen to work with our JP students and the students themselves met as a group during the first week of the new semester. This meeting had two purposes. One was to share specific information about the course with the teachers. Procedures were explained, expectations shared, information concerning the course was handed out, and questions were answered. The teachers were thus given the same information as the students. The second purpose was to give the college students a chance to get acquainted with their cooperating teachers in a relaxed setting over a cup of coffee. This meeting has proven to be invaluable in getting the semester off to a good start. Then, at the close of the semester, feedback was sought from both the students and their cooperating teachers via questionnaires. This provided helpful information concerning how the course could be improved. This information was carefully considered as the course continued to be refined during subsequent years.

The Activities List proved to be the most enthusiastically received by both the students and their cooperating teachers. It is because of their enthusiasm that this list is being shared.

In developing the Activities List an attempt was made to gradually involve the student in the educational setting. For instance, often, without such specificity, students would not meet the custodian. And it is common knowledge that being on friendly terms with the custodian has its advantages!

As you read through the List, you will gain an understanding about the types of experiences the students had. Both students and their cooperating teachers had a copy. Many used it together on a weekly basis to plan the students' experiences. All used it as a guide to help them become involved in the full range of experiences.

The advantages of the List were several. First, it provided definite activities in which the students were expected to become engaged. Those activities were many and varied, as you will notice. Often both cooperating teachers and students do not quite know to what depth the student should become involved in a course such as this and/or how soon. The List provided a guide. Secondly, the List was flexible. That is, students could work ahead on the List as far as they felt was appropriate for themselves or as far as their cooperating teacher felt was appropriate. They were discouraged from getting behind, but when there were extenuating circumstances, students were able to work through the problems as soon as they could. Teachers also appreciated this flexibility because sometimes activities on the Activities List and activities in their own rooms would not mesh easily. The flexible approach allowed for those kinds of circumstances.

The List also made it necessary for the students and cooperating

teachers to communicate. It was surprising how often the lack of communication about simple things could lead to problems. But the List gave students the opportunity to ask about specific tasks that they were eager to do and might not have had the assertiveness to ask about if there had been no List. Cooperating teachers would also see that they had to provide feedback concerning something the student had done.

Finally, the Activities List gave the students some common experiences and at approximately the same time. Because of this, our seminar discussions could center around certain activities that were completed by most of the students. Examples of this would be leading a discussion using questions on all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy or observing their cooperating teacher using a specific checklist.

It should be noted that some of the items on the List were to be done once and that would take care of it. (i.e. becoming familiar with where the gym is.) Other activities were of such nature that when the student did it once, he would be expected to continue doing it. An example of this might be helping with routine matters, found on the List in weeks 2 and 3.

Also, the weekly activities overlapped. Weeks 1 & 2, and weeks 2 & 3, etc. This build in the flexibility that was so very necessary for a program such as this. When the List was revised every year, dates were included on the same line with "weeks __ & __", thus preventing any question about exactly when the students were to be in the classrooms.

The following is the Activities List. Students write the date they completed the activity on the line in front of that activity. They did this, but it was seldom checked, and then only a quick glance during the seminar period. They were on their honor when it came to those activities for which they were not handing something in, and it worked very well.

ACTIVITIES LIST

Write down date when items were done the first time or when they were completed if done only once.

Weeks 1 & 2: (Actual dates for the semester would be included here)

Activities

- _____ Observe class
- _____ Peruse books and materials used by teacher
- _____ Become familiar with where the following are located:
 - _____ principal's office
 - _____ teacher's lounge
 - _____ A-V equipment
 - _____ paper supplies
 - _____ rest rooms (both teacher's and children's)
 - _____ cafeteria
 - _____ gym
 - _____ learning center/library
 - _____ introduce self to secretary
 - _____ introduce self to custodian
- _____ Become familiar with routine (bathroom break, attendance, lunch time, starting time, special teachers' time etc.)
- _____ Become familiar with the school rules (permission to be in halls etc. which may be found in a school handbook if they have one)
- _____ Take text to school and have cooperating teacher peruse it

Weeks 2 & 3:

Activities

- _____ Helping with routine matters (taking students to and from gym, rest room, helping prepare them to go out of the room)
- _____ Giving individual help during children's study time
- _____ Identify 10 concepts that are taught on this grade level in one of the areas of reading, math, science, social studies. Write these down to hand in for discussion.
- _____ Prepare a lesson plan for teaching a concept to a small group. Please include items in Chapter 4 of the text. (Set induction, stimulus variation, closure.)
- _____ Have the cooperating teacher critique it.

Weeks 3 & 4:

- _____ Put up at least 1 bulletin board that fits in with current units/activities/interests/holidays.
- _____ Teach a lesson to a small group, using either the lesson plan devised earlier or a new one.

Weeks 4 & 5:

- _____ Teach a follow-up lesson or
- _____ Rewrite your lesson so as to individualize it for a very bright or very slow group.

Activities

- _____ Use at least 1 piece of A-V equipment.
- _____ Construct questions on all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy using content that is found in the Curriculum for your classroom.
- _____ Lead a discussion, asking Q's on all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. (This can be a part of the follow-up lesson or a totally new lesson.)

NEW CLASSROOM AT DIFFERENT LEVEL

Week 6:

- _____ Observe unselected data
- _____ Become familiar with classroom routine
- _____ Observe teacher using attending behavior checklist. (This will be handed out in seminar)
- _____ Give individual children help when possible

Weeks 6 & 7:

- _____ Help with routine matters (see week 2 & 3 for description).
- _____ Identify 10 concepts that are taught in the areas of reading, math, science, or social studies on this grade level.
- _____ Prepare a lesson plan for teaching a concept to a small group. Please include items in Ch. 4 of the text. (set induction, stimulus variation, closure)

Activities

_____ Develop questions that you will use in the above lesson or another lesson that are on all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

_____ Have the cooperating teacher critique the lesson plan and questions.

Weeks 7 & 8:

_____ Put up at least one bulletin board that fits in with current units/activities/interests/holidays or seasons.

_____ Prepare a short unit in any area you choose.

_____ Write a lesson plan for one lesson from the unit.

_____ Teach the lesson.

_____ Analyze the lesson taught with cooperating teacher.

Weeks 8 & 9:

_____ Prepare a test in one of the following areas: reading, math, science, social studies. (This could follow-up your unit)

_____ Have your cooperating teacher critique it.

_____ Give your test and analyze the results.

_____ Write up your analysis briefly and hand in. Be sure to include a copy of your test.

Weeks 9 & 10:

_____ Teach at least one lesson in which you practice questioning techniques by leading a small group

Activities

or whole class discussion

_____ Analyze the lesson as it was taught with the
cooperating teacher.

_____ Use at least one piece of A-V equipment.

Weeks 10 & 11:

_____ Have your cooperating teacher check your attend-
ing behavior using workbook checklist.

_____ Teach a lesson while being observed by cooperating
teacher and university supervisor.

This list of activities could be altered to fit the educational background of any group of students who were preparing to student teach. It could be made more specific or more flexible. Perhaps the list of activities without dates would be helpful. You are encouraged to try it or alter it to meet your needs. It was meant to help, not be a burden, and judging from the feedback, this proved to be the case.